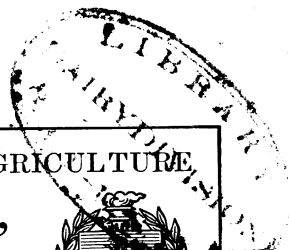


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L. A. M. Y.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



FARMERS' BULLETIN

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WASHINGTON, D. C.

703

JANUARY 14, 1916

Contribution from the Office of Markets and Rural Organization, Charles J. Brand, Chief.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PARCEL POST MARKETING.¹

By LEWIS B. FLOHR, *Investigator in Marketing by Parcel Post*, and C. T. MORE, *Investigator in Grades and Standards*.

INTRODUCTION.

This bulletin contains information and suggestions for persons desiring to sell or buy produce by parcel post. A great deal of marketing has been and is now being done by this method. Many persons, however, are only partially informed or perhaps entirely unaware of the requirements necessary to market farm produce successfully in this manner. An extensive campaign of education is necessary in order that both producers and consumers may realize its possibilities as well as its limitations. The increased cost of living has caused many persons to look to securing produce by parcel post as a means of relief, and some have been disappointed because of unsatisfactory results arising from various causes. Physically the transportation of practically all kinds of produce is a possibility; economically it is frequently not justifiable.

A thorough study of the possibility of marketing farm products by parcel post is being conducted by the Department of Agriculture with the intention of publishing the results in a series of bulletins, each dealing with a specific phase of the question. The first of these publications, "Shipping Eggs by Parcel Post," was issued as Farmers' Bulletin 594. The present bulletin contains general information which has been accumulated in the course of these investigations and which should be of use to those producers and consumers who are interested in the more general phases of the subject.

¹ This bulletin is written for producers and consumers in all parts of the country who are interested in marketing by parcel post.

CONTACT.

One of the most important requirements is the bringing of the producer and the consumer into business contact. This may be attained (1) by personal acquaintance; (2) through the acquaintance of a third person; (3) by advertising in an appropriately selected paper; (4) by personal canvass; and (5) through the post office in the city or town in which a customer is sought.

Once a satisfactory parcel post business is established with or through an acquaintance, other customers are likely to be secured through the first one. Advertising frequently may bring the producer into touch with a prospective purchaser. Some papers run a special parcel post advertising department or section and a brief but well-worded advertisement often will bring results.

Another method is for the producer to make a personal canvass in a residence section of the town or city selected. Good, representative samples of the produce available at the time doubtless will help to secure the first sale.

The postmasters in 35 cities of the country, under the direction of the Post Office Department, have instituted campaigns intended to foster parcel post marketing. The names and addresses of producers, together with the produce offered, are listed for distribution to the patrons of the offices; and some of these postmasters issue for distribution to producers, lists of consumers who wish to buy.

The cities are as follows:

Athens, Ga.
Atlanta, Ga.
Austin, Tex.
Baltimore, Md.
Birmingham, Ala.
Boston, Mass.
Brooklyn, N. Y.
Chicago, Ill.
Cincinnati, Ohio.
Cleveland, Ohio.
Dallas, Tex.
Denver, Colo.
Detroit, Mich.
Galveston, Tex.
Hartford, Conn.
Indianapolis, Ind.
La Crosse, Wis.
Lawrence, Mass.

Lincoln, Nebr.
Los Angeles, Cal.
Louisville, Ky.
Lynn, Mass.
Minneapolis, Minn.
Nashville, Tenn.
New Orleans, La.
Philadelphia, Pa.
Portland, Oreg.
Providence, R. I.
Richmond, Va.
Rock Island, Ill.
San Francisco, Cal.
Seattle, Wash.
St. Paul, Minn.
St. Louis, Mo.
Washington, D. C.

POSTAL REQUIREMENTS.

Persons desiring to market by parcel post should acquaint themselves with the time at which mails are dispatched from their post offices, so that they may regulate the preparation and mailing of

parcels accordingly. On rural delivery routes this suggestion can not always be followed. In some cases certain patrons can intercept the carrier, on his return trip, at no great distance from their homes, while others may find it convenient to take the weekly shipment direct to the post office themselves when going to town on their weekly shopping trip. Where it is possible, perishable shipments should be made so as to reach destination for delivery during ordinary delivery hours. Postmasters will give information as to the postal requirements for mailing the various kinds of produce.

Parcels containing perishable articles must be marked "Perishable"; eggs must be marked "Eggs"; any parcel containing glass must be marked "Fragile." Articles likely to spoil within the time reasonably required for transportation and delivery are not accepted for mailing.

If desired, a receipt can be secured from any postmaster, acknowledging the mailing of a parcel, on the payment of 1 cent. For 3 cents a parcel may be insured against loss if not valued at over \$5.

PARCEL POST ZONES.

The United States is divided into "units," each one of which is numbered, as illustrated in figure 1. The center of each unit constitutes the center of the zones for all post offices within that unit. The first zone consists of any given unit together with all the adjoining units, even though they but touch at the corner. The second zone embraces all those units within a radius of 150 miles from the center of any given unit. The whole of any unit, any part of which is touched by this 150-mile boundary line, is considered entirely within that zone.

There is a separate zone map or chart for each unit. Figure 1 shows a section of the map for the unit in which Washington is located. The second circle shows the nominal boundary of zone 2; but owing to the fact that all units which are touched by this boundary line fall entirely within the second zone, the units which are bounded by the heavy line (outside the second circle) are entirely within zone 2. This principle applies to all other zones—that is, any unit which is touched at any point by the boundary of a given zone lies wholly within that zone and is so considered for the purposes of the parcel post service.

Particular description is here given of the first and second zones because the great bulk of the shipping of farm products by parcel post is likely to be done within these zones. The rate can be ascertained readily from the accompanying tables.

Table 1 gives the local parcel post rates applying to parcels which are not sent beyond the territory of the mailing office.

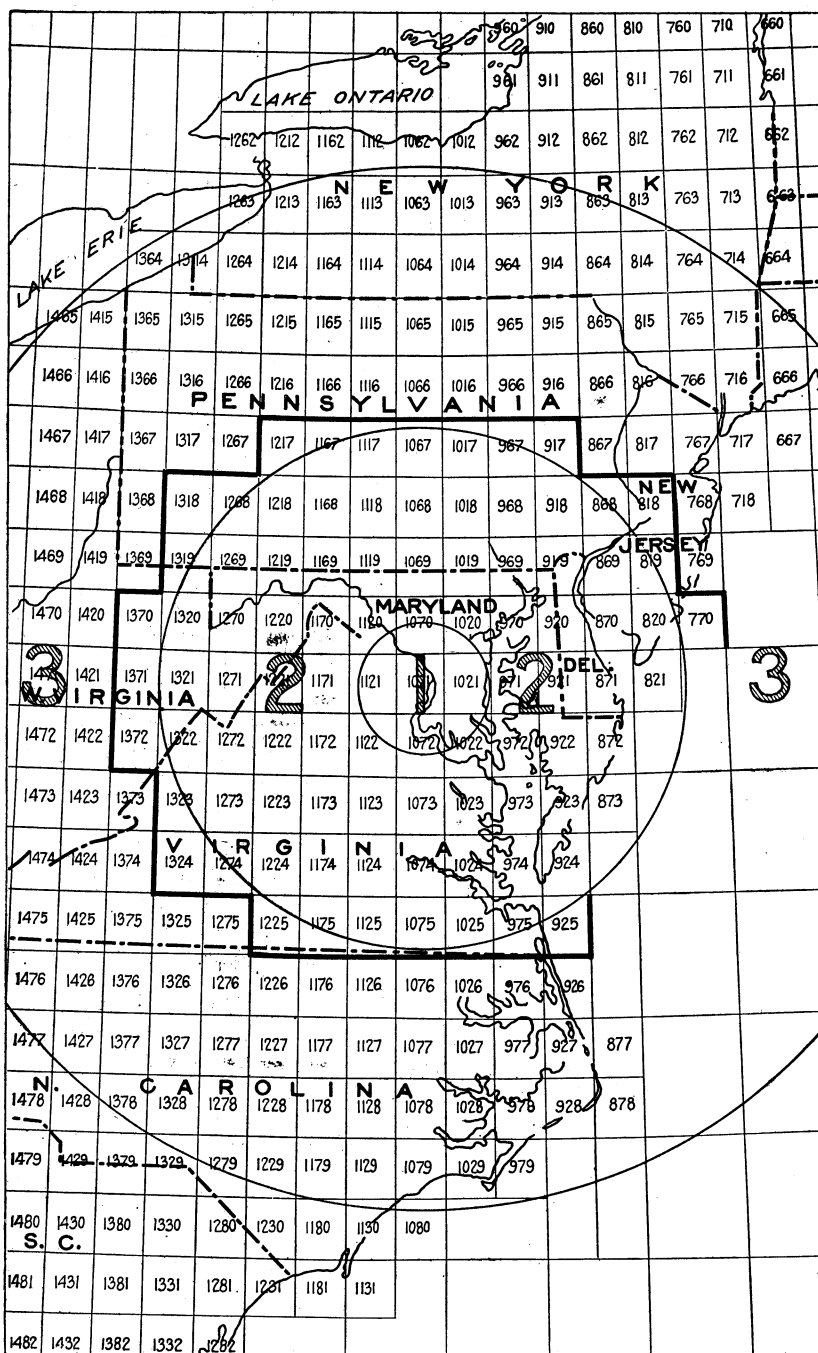


TABLE 1.—*Local parcel post rates.*

| Pounds. | Postage. | Pounds. | Postage. | Pounds. | Postage. | Pounds. | Postage. | Pounds. | Postage. |
|---------|---------------|---------|---------------|---------|---------------|---------|---------------|---------|---------------|
| | <i>Cents.</i> | | <i>Cents.</i> | | <i>Cents.</i> | | <i>Cents.</i> | | <i>Cents.</i> |
| 1 | 5 | 11 | 10 | 21 | 15 | 31 | 20 | 41 | 25 |
| 2 | 6 | 12 | 11 | 22 | 16 | 32 | 21 | 42 | 26 |
| 3 | 6 | 13 | 11 | 23 | 16 | 33 | 21 | 43 | 26 |
| 4 | 7 | 14 | 12 | 24 | 17 | 34 | 22 | 44 | 27 |
| 5 | 7 | 15 | 12 | 25 | 17 | 35 | 22 | 45 | 27 |
| 6 | 8 | 16 | 13 | 26 | 18 | 36 | 23 | 46 | 28 |
| 7 | 8 | 17 | 13 | 27 | 18 | 37 | 23 | 47 | 28 |
| 8 | 9 | 18 | 14 | 28 | 19 | 38 | 24 | 48 | 29 |
| 9 | 9 | 19 | 14 | 29 | 19 | 39 | 24 | 49 | 29 |
| 10 | 10 | 20 | 15 | 30 | 20 | 40 | 25 | 50 | 30 |

Fifty pounds is the weight limit for local delivery. The rates are 5 cents for the first pound and 1 cent additional for each additional 2 pounds or fraction thereof.

TABLE 2.—*First and second zone parcel post rates.*

| Pounds. | Postage. | Pounds. | Postage. | Pounds. | Postage. | Pounds. | Postage. | Pounds. | Postage. |
|---------|---------------|---------|---------------|---------|---------------|---------|---------------|---------|---------------|
| | <i>Cents.</i> | | <i>Cents.</i> | | <i>Cents.</i> | | <i>Cents.</i> | | <i>Cents.</i> |
| 1 | 5 | 11 | 15 | 21 | 25 | 31 | 35 | 41 | 45 |
| 2 | 6 | 12 | 16 | 22 | 26 | 32 | 36 | 42 | 46 |
| 3 | 7 | 13 | 17 | 23 | 27 | 33 | 37 | 43 | 47 |
| 4 | 8 | 14 | 18 | 24 | 28 | 34 | 38 | 44 | 48 |
| 5 | 9 | 15 | 19 | 25 | 29 | 35 | 39 | 45 | 49 |
| 6 | 10 | 16 | 20 | 26 | 30 | 36 | 40 | 46 | 50 |
| 7 | 11 | 17 | 21 | 27 | 31 | 37 | 41 | 47 | 51 |
| 8 | 12 | 18 | 22 | 28 | 32 | 38 | 42 | 48 | 52 |
| 9 | 13 | 19 | 23 | 29 | 33 | 39 | 43 | 49 | 53 |
| 10 | 14 | 20 | 24 | 30 | 34 | 40 | 44 | 50 | 54 |

The weight limit within the first and second zones is 50 pounds. The rates apply to all points within the first and second zones, there being no difference in rates between these two zones. A simple rule to determine the postage on any parcel not going beyond the second zone is to add 4 to the number of pounds, and the resulting number is the postage required in cents. Example: A parcel weighs 13 pounds and 11 ounces; this will require postage on 14 pounds (as any fraction of a pound is considered a full pound); 14 plus 4 equals 18 cents postage.

An exception to these rates of postage is made when the office to which the parcel is addressed, though geographically within the second zone, is 300 or more miles distant by the shortest regular mail route. The rates are then 6 cents for the first pound and 2 cents additional for each additional pound.

The weight limit for the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth zones is 20 pounds. Further information as to rates, zones, and similar questions may be obtained at any post office.

MEASUREMENT LIMITS FOR PARCEL POST MAIL MATTER.

In addition to the weight limits shown in connection with the postage tables given, there is a measurement limit, which is the same for all zones. This limit is that the girth (measurement around) and the length added must not exceed 84 inches. For example, a parcel 12 inches square (48 inches around) and 36 inches long would be just up to the limit; as would also a parcel 14 inches square (56 inches around) and 28 inches long. A parcel cubical in shape and 16 inches in each dimension would measure 64 inches around, and to this would be added 16 inches for length, making 80 inches, or 4 inches less than the limit.



FIG. 2.—A parcel-post market basket of assorted vegetables, covered (cover sewed on).
Weight 26 pounds, postage 30 cents within first and second zones.

The foregoing postal information was that in effect December 20, 1915.

CONTAINERS.

One important requirement for parcel post shipping and marketing is a proper and satisfactory container. Sometimes the consumer can secure containers more readily and economically than the producer. Those with handles are much less likely to be damaged in transit in the mails than those which are not thus supplied and which are likely to be tossed or thrown or handled by the string or twine used in tying them. A bamboo basket, such as is shown in figures 2, 3, and 4, serves the purpose very well and may be used a long time.

Ordinary splint baskets made of strips of veneer may also be used, and if they can be secured at a price sufficiently cheap a new one for each shipment is more economical than having them returned, unless they are sent back in lots of 10 or more under one cover. This, of course, necessitates using them without a wooden handle, in which case a heavy twine should be used for a handle. This twine can be untied and the baskets nested, or placed in one another, for return shipment. If a basket with a wooden handle is used, care should be taken to see that it is securely nailed, not only at the rim of the basket but farther down toward the bottom, so as to prevent undue leverage which may break loose the nailing.



FIG. 3.—Same basket as in figure 2, opened.

Corrugated pasteboard cartons frequently may be found useful and desirable for this service. They are made in a great variety of sizes, dimensions, and patterns, and when empty are shipped "knocked down" flat, as may be seen in figure 5.

PACKING PRODUCE FOR SHIPMENT.

Few persons know how to prepare and pack fruit and produce for market. Proper packing for parcel post marketing is of primary importance and needs to be emphasized so that both the contents and the container may carry properly, arrive in good condition, and present a satisfactory appearance. The pack should be regular, of as nearly uniform produce as possible, and of full measure according

to the quantity ordered. A little practice will enable almost any one to pack a basket or container of any kind in a satisfactory manner.

AGREEING ON PRICES.

Not only must the farmer have something additional to the usual price to compensate him for the extra work, container, and postage required, but the consumer must also have something to attract him to marketing by parcel post. An equitable distribution of the difference between the usual farm price and the retail price is necessary. Just what portion of this difference in price is to accrue to the pro-

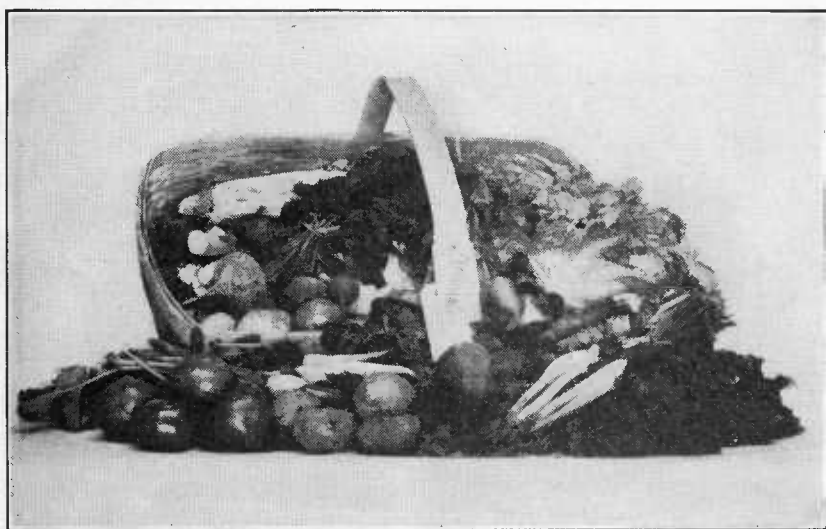


FIG. 4.—Same basket as in figure 2, vegetables displayed.

ducer and what to the consumer will depend on the circumstances in each case and the size of the order. In determining what the price shall be, both the farm price and the retail price paid by the consumer when he markets in the ordinary way should be taken into consideration. The consumer must receive either a better article at the usual retail price or an article of the grade usually purchased at some concession in price.

The fact that a large number of farmers and consumers are not endeavoring to take advantage of the parcel post method of marketing is due not so much to the absence of a desire to give it a trial as to the farmer's lack of knowledge of marketing requirements and customs and the consumer's lack of similar knowledge and of confidence in the farmer's produce and dependableness.

REMITTANCES—BUSINESS ARRANGEMENT.

A personal acquaintance should be established between producer and consumer, if it does not exist, when they come into business contact. This will help a great deal in furthering parcel post marketing, and also will eliminate many of the misunderstandings which may occur from time to time. A definite understanding should exist as to the duties of each in regard to remittances, claims for damaged or spoiled produce, and the preservation and return of containers. Monthly remittances by the consumer probably would be satisfactory. More frequent payments probably would be objectionable to the pur-

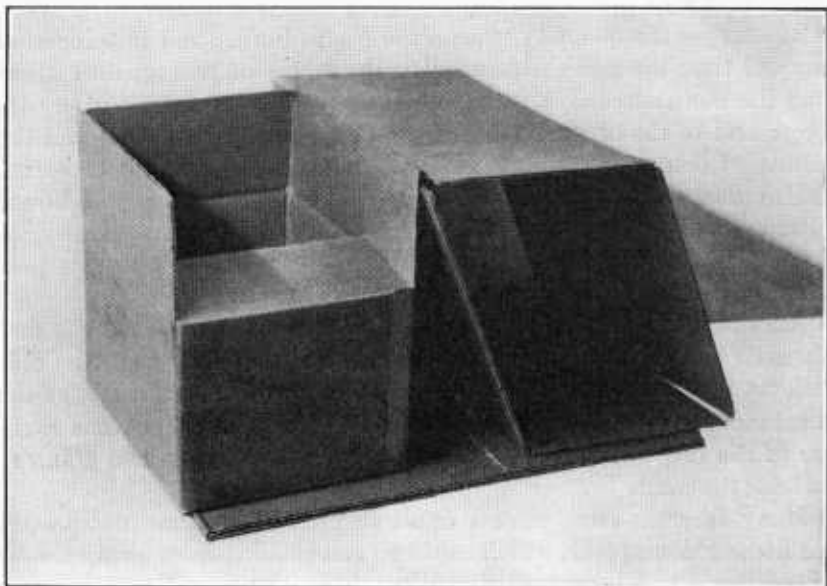


FIG. 5.—Corrugated slotted cartons. One “knocked down” flat, one (on the right) partially set up, and one ready to fill.

chaser, while the producer in most cases would not be satisfied with less frequent settlements. Consumers should remember that farmers are usually busy and not inclined to needless correspondence. Farmers should be prompt in attending to correspondence if they desire to do business.

THE ECONOMICS OF PARCEL POST MARKETING.

Parcel post as a means of transportation has been found by commercial houses to be useful and efficient. There is no reason why farmers can not make extensive use of it under certain conditions if they will. It has been found that one of the chief factors in prevent-

ing the satisfactory development of parcel post marketing has been the price asked by some farmers for produce. To illustrate: One farmer's wife was receiving 20 cents a pound for butter in her local market, a country store. When asked if she would be willing to ship it to a city by parcel post, and at what price, she replied that she would do so at 50 cents a pound. Would-be purchasers frequently have been known to offer producers a lower price than they can obtain in their local markets. It is needless to say that such imperfect and erroneous ideas as to proper and equitable prices altogether defeat the possibility of marketing produce by parcel post. Business in marketing by parcel post can be secured and held only by shipping produce of high quality and by charging reasonable prices.

The larger the quantity, within the postal limits, that is shipped at any one time the more economical is the factor of postage and therefore the more attractive from the viewpoint of cost both to the producer and to the consumer. This applies both to shipments and the return of empty containers. It would not be economical to secure half a dozen different kinds of vegetables from as many different producers, but if a supply of half a dozen kinds of vegetables, or vegetables and fruits, could be obtained in one parcel from one producer it would be both advantageous and attractive.

Another advantage to the producer in parcel post marketing is that his mail box or local post office becomes his shipping station. This relieves him from any extra trip in order to make shipment, as the rural mail carrier takes the shipment from the mail box or some member of the farmer's family deposits it at the post office when going to call for the mail.

Many farmers often have a small surplus of produce, not needed for home consumption, which could be marketed if some ready means of getting it to a consumer were available. The parcel post supplies this medium. There are also many supplemental or side lines of production which could be developed for the same purpose.

Mutual confidence and helpfulness are needed in order to succeed; cooperation is needed. Consumers are interested in buying by parcel post only when they can secure more satisfactory produce, some advantage in price, or both. The producer will not be interested in marketing by parcel post unless it means some additional net return to him. A high quality of produce, well prepared, carefully and attractively packed, and forwarded so as to reach its destination at the time desired will go a long way toward the establishment and continuance of business. Ordinary or inferior produce will not only lose a customer but hinder the gaining of others. The producer must aim to give satisfaction by supplying his customers, as nearly as possible, with produce which meets their individual desires. The con-

sumer must also aim to give satisfaction by properly caring for and returning containers, making prompt remittances as agreed upon, and by doing his part in all phases of the transaction. In other words, a square deal is needed.

QUALITY AND APPEARANCE OF PRODUCE.

It is probable that the point which will make the strongest appeal to the average consumer is that he can secure by parcel post a fresher, brighter, more attractive, and thus possibly a better product than he can obtain otherwise. Producers should remember always that the appearance of fruit and produce is one of the strongest factors in making a sale; it will not pay to market anything but standard and fancy produce by parcel post; and the surest way to establish a dependable, continuing, and increasing business is to forward nothing but strictly reliable and satisfactory produce.

The average producer, as a rule, does not realize the importance of appearance as a factor in selling goods and frequently is careless and indifferent in preparing produce for market. The consumer, on the other hand, relies very largely upon appearance in selecting food supplies, and unattractive articles are passed by promptly. Produce should be of high quality, clean and attractive, carefully and neatly prepared and packed, of one variety, and, as far as practicable, uniform in size, shape, color, and quality; and last, but not least, carefully packed to insure its arrival in a satisfactory condition.

STANDARDS OF QUALITY.

The list of fruits, vegetables, and other products treated in this bulletin is not exhaustive, but probably covers those most likely to be handled by parcel post.

All successful cooperative marketing organizations of growers and private marketing organizations have an ironclad rule that no fruit of any kind which has fallen to the ground shall be picked up and shipped. It is even more important that this rule should be observed in parcel post marketing. Producers should at all times strive for uniformity in the products shipped—uniformity of size especially, and also of color and quality. Figure 6 shows three bunches of asparagus of uniform size and quality, neatly tied; also a quantity of loose asparagus, quite variable in size and quality, which would not sell well. The same general principles which applied in the selection and grading of the bunched asparagus should apply to the preparation and grading of all other produce.

It may be stated that as a usual proposition it is feasible to ship only the produce that is of high value in comparison with its weight. In any case, the net returns will be the determining factor; only gen-

eral facts can be stated in this connection. In family baskets or containers, or in assorted lots of vegetables and of fruits, there is likely to be a demand for the inclusion of many of the heavier articles, such as potatoes, cantaloupes, cabbage, and onions, the shipment of which alone might not be justified.

POULTRY.

All poultry should be carefully picked to avoid torn flesh, and all pin feathers removed. Dry-picked poultry usually presents a much better appearance than that which is scalded. It is very important that poultry be thoroughly cooled before shipping. If desired, the head and feet may be left on, but in parcel post marketing it is more economical to ship with heads and feet off. If heads are left on, they

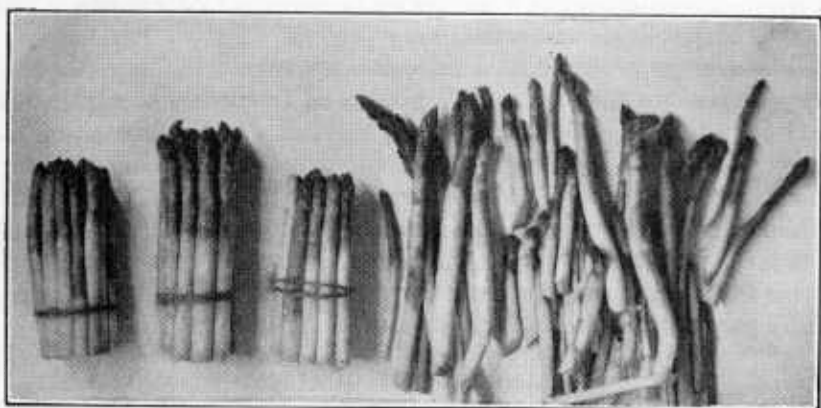


FIG. 6.—Asparagus properly and improperly graded and prepared.

should be neatly wrapped in parchment paper. If removed, the skin of the neck should be first drawn back, so that after the head is taken off the neck skin will completely cover the neck. This should then be tied and wrapped in parchment paper. Poultry ships and keeps much better if undrawn. It should not be drawn unless the customer insists on having it that way or unless State or local law requires it. No diseased poultry should be offered for sale. It is desirable to offer only plump, well-fattened birds. Old stock of doubtful eating quality should be disposed of in some other manner.

Dressed poultry may be roughly divided as follows: Chickens, hens, ducks, geese, and turkeys. The term "chickens" includes broilers, fryers, and roasters. Some dealers draw the line between chickens and hens as that age at which the end of the breast bone will not give under pressure, but is found firm.

Broilers usually weigh from 1 to $2\frac{1}{2}$ pounds, fryers from 2 to $3\frac{1}{2}$ pounds, and roasters from $3\frac{1}{2}$ pounds up.

Hens for roasting must be in desirable condition and not so old that the flesh is not tender. Hens for stewing may include roasters as well as the older fowls.

Old roosters should not be marketed by parcel post, as they are not of a satisfactory quality.

Turkeys may be classed as young hens or toms and old hens or toms.

Ducks and geese should be sold at such an age and in such condition as required by the customer.

BUTTER.

Shipping butter by parcel post is fully treated in a bulletin now being prepared for publication and which will be announced when issued.

EGGS.

Farmers' Bulletin 594, "Shipping Eggs by Parcel Post," discusses this subject fully. This bulletin can be obtained from the Division of Publications, United States Department of Agriculture.

FRUIT.

Apples.—Apples are probably our most important fruit crop and lend themselves readily to parcel post marketing. There is a promising field for developing marketing of fancy eating apples direct from producer to consumer, and every grower should ascertain for himself if he can profitably make this system supplement other methods of marketing. It is necessary, of course, that satisfactory markets be available within a reasonable distance and that local conditions be favorable.

Only varieties of well-known merit for eating purposes should be marketed. They should all be well-grown specimens, of proper shape and size for the variety, of normal color, ripe enough to eat (unless the customer wishes to hold them), but never overripe; that is, they should be marketed in their proper season. They should be sound, clean, free from damage of worms or other pests, disease, skin puncture, or other defects.

Berries.—All berries should be shipped as soon after picking as possible. They should not be held over from day to day. They should be picked only when dry, be removed from the sun, and kept as cool as possible. Defective and cull berries should be kept separate as the fruit is gathered to avoid further handling for the purpose of sorting. Rehandling does great damage to berries as well as to cherries and currants.

Strawberries.—Strawberries may be picked when sufficiently ripe to reach the consumer in good condition. They should be picked with the hull or cap and the stem on, the stem being pinched off as close to the berry as convenient. The berries should be placed in the

boxes as picked instead of being held in the hand until a handful is gathered. Small, inferior, dirty, and overripe berries should be placed in separate boxes as picked, but should not be sent to market. The quality and size should be the same from top to bottom and the boxes well filled. Topping or facing the boxes with the larger fruit should not be done, but turning down the stems of the top layer improves the appearance of the package. No leaves, sticks, long stems, or other trash should be allowed to get into the boxes.

Dewberries and blackberries.—Dewberries and blackberries should be picked only when dry and handled as little as possible. They are ripe enough when a full, bright black, but for parcel post marketing should not be allowed to become too ripe. All undesirable ones should be kept out as the berries are picked.

Raspberries.—Special care must be taken to see that raspberries are picked only when dry and while they are still firm. They should be carefully handled, graded as picked, and never rehandled. Boxes should be well filled, as they have a decided tendency to settle down in shipping because of their cuplike shape.

*Cantaloupes.*¹—If for use within 48 hours, cantaloupes should not be picked until they are fully netted and will part from the vine clean; that is, a "full slip" without tearing the flesh of the melon. They should be "hard ripe," not full ripe, yellow, or mushy. They require just as careful handling in the field or packing house as peaches, pears, and other soft fruits, to avoid bruising, and therefore should be brought from the field in baskets or crates, not loose in the wagon. All poorly netted or smooth melons should be discarded, also all cracked, ill-shaped, overripe, or immature melons and those with soft ends or other defects.

Cherries.—All cherries must have the stems on and when possible should be clipped from the tree with scissors instead of being pulled. Cherries pulled from the stem decay quickly. Soft, bruised, overripe, bird-picked, and all other defective fruit should be kept out.

Currants.—Currants should be picked before becoming overripe. They grow in clusters, and unless the stems are fairly full they should not be put in the boxes. Avoid shipping any unduly small, shriveled, or mashed fruit. As currants mold easily, they should be picked and kept cool and dry and marketed quickly.

Grapes.—For eating purposes grapes should be allowed to become ripe, and only those of desirable size should be shipped. Dried, shrunk, cracked, mildewed, or otherwise defective grapes should be trimmed out or the entire cluster discarded. Only full, attractive clusters should be shipped for table use.

¹ For directions regarding the preparation of cantaloupes for market see: More, C. T., and Branch, G. V. The commercial grading, packing, and shipping of cantaloupes. Farmers' Bulletin 707.

Peaches.—It is very important that peaches be handled carefully at all times to prevent bruising. For shipment by parcel post they should be about ripe, but only "hard ripe," ready to eat in not less than two days. Varieties and colors should not be mixed unless so ordered. They should be smooth, well-colored, entirely free from worms, blemishes, split pits or seeds, bruises, disease, or other defects, and of good size for the variety.

Pears.—Pears should not be picked so ripe as some other kinds of fruit, because they bruise and turn black so easily. In fact, it is advisable to pick most varieties when matured, though green, or just starting to ripen. If picked when just turning, they should reach the consumer about right to use. They should be free from worms, bruises, and cuts, practically free from disease, specks, blemishes, and other defects, and should be of proper shape and size for the variety. No fruit off the ground should ever be shipped.

Plums.—Plums may be picked so that they will reach the consumer just ready to use. Careful handling will prevent decay in shipping. Undersized fruit should be sorted out. Cracked, ill-shaped, off-colored, or otherwise defective plums should be culled out, and no overripe fruit should be overlooked, for a decaying plum wets all those around it and causes them to rot.

VEGETABLES.

Asparagus.—Asparagus should be cut often enough so that it does not become tough or overgrown. The tops should not be wet, as this starts decay, and all imperfect stalks should be culled out. It should be carefully tied in half-pound or pound bunches, with the tops all even and the bottoms trimmed off square. It improves the appearance of asparagus to wrap it in parchment paper.

Beans (snap beans).—Beans, whether bush or pole varieties, should be picked when free from rain or dew, while tender, crisp enough to snap, and before the seed is large enough to bulge the pod very much. The size of the seed will vary with the variety, but both pod and seed must be tender. Any defective, rusty, insect-eaten, discolored, or undesirable beans should be kept out. They should be fresh picked when shipped. Only varieties which are entirely or practically free from strings should be grown for parcel post marketing.

Cabbage.—Only perfect, hard heads of cabbage should be considered for parcel post marketing. They should be carefully trimmed of waste leaves and stalk, and soft, growing, bursting, frozen, or decaying heads must be eliminated. A variety producing small to medium-sized firm heads should be selected.

Cauliflower.—The heads of cauliflower should be very carefully handled when cut and after having been cut. In trimming, at least

one circle of the large outer leaves besides the smaller ones beneath should be left to protect the head. Paper is sometimes placed over the head for further protection and tucked down inside the leaf stems. All heads must be compact, and any inferior, discolored, insect-damaged, or otherwise defective ones should not be shipped. To be of the most desirable eating quality, cauliflower should be used by the consumer as soon after cutting as possible.

Celery.—Only firm, fresh, well-bleached, clean celery should be shipped. It should be washed and well trimmed of roots, loose and diseased or discolored leaves, and stems. The stalks should be of one length and practically uniform in size. They should be freed from water as thoroughly as possible and wrapped in paper.

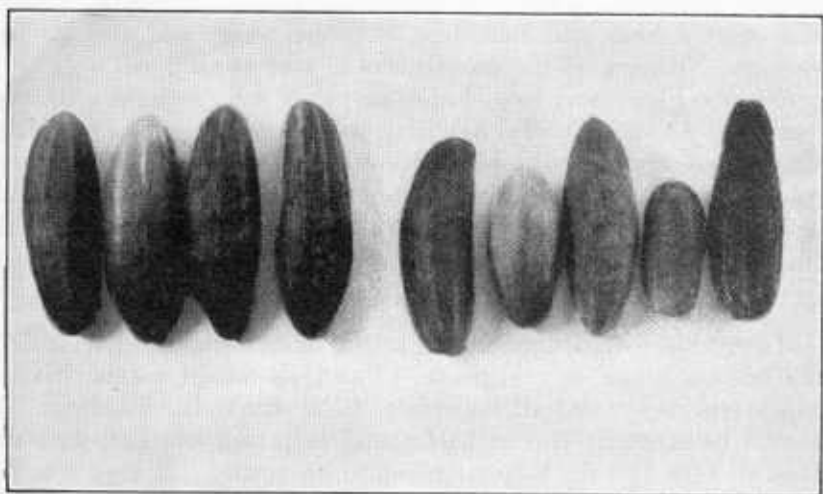


FIG. 7.—Four cucumbers on the left practically uniform in size, shape, and coloring. These are much more attractive and salable than the five irregular and defective specimens (culls) shown on the right.

Cucumbers.—For slicing, only the long, straight, smooth, green cucumbers from 6 to 9 inches in length should be shipped. The spongy, thick, yellow, runty, or overlarge ones, or those having wilted or shrunk ends, should be culled out. The cucumbers should be cut and not pulled from the vine.

For pickling, cucumbers should be of the size desired by the customer, such as "midgets," the very small ones, 2-inch, 3-inch, dill-pickle size, etc.

Eggplant.—Eggplant should be cut when the fruits are of proper size, but should not be allowed to become tough. Undesirable sized, off-color, wilted, or defective ones should be discarded. The fruit should be wrapped in paper and carefully packed.

Green corn (sugar).—The sooner sugar corn is eaten after gathering, the better its eating quality. No inferior ears should be shipped. All should be well developed, free from worms, and gathered at the proper stage of development; that is, in full milk, but before showing any signs of firmness or toughness.

Kale. (See Spinach.)

Lettuce (head).—Consumers prefer firm, well-headed lettuce. It should be well developed and the heart turning white before cutting. It is best to ship only lettuce which is free from dirt, and no discolored, insect-damaged, or imperfect heads should be included.

Lettuce (loose leaf).—Some varieties of lettuce do not produce heads but instead a loose cluster of leaves. It should be cut when of good size, but tender and crisp. Trim off the outside, discolored, and otherwise unattractive leaves. Lettuce should be dry when packed.

Onions (dry).—All onions should be ripe, well cured, dry, and clean. It is well to ship only those of uniform size and shape. No sprouted, frozen, or otherwise defective bulbs should be marketed.

Peas.—Growers should allow peas to mature properly; but, of course, consumers do not want hard, ripe peas. They should be cool and dry when picked and packed to avoid heating and molding. Immature, dirty, or defective pods should be discarded.

Peppers (sweet).—The sweet varieties of peppers should be well grown and of uniform size and color. No wilted, cracked, or dirty fruits should be included. They should be crisp and dry when shipped.

Peppers (hot).—Hot peppers may be supplied according to the desires of the consumer.

Potatoes.—Occasionally it may be found profitable to market potatoes in small quantities by parcel post. They should be of good grade, one variety, clean, smooth, sound, and of a good table variety. Those affected with sunburn, disease, second growth, cuts, and bruises should be culled out. No potatoes less than 2 inches in diameter should be shipped, and a uniform run of size is very desirable.

New potatoes should be of good size, preferably not less than 2 inches in diameter and equally as free from defects as old ones.

Root vegetables.—Root vegetables, such as beets, carrots, parsnips, and turnips, should be tender, fresh, sound, washed clean, and of desirable size. No overgrown, stringy, coarse, or undersized stock should be marketed.

Sweet potatoes.—Sweet potatoes should be of good shape and color, clean, sound, bright, and of good size. Overgrown, coarse potatoes are not wanted. It is desirable to market stock of as near an even size as possible, and the medium size is preferred. As sweet potatoes

spoil easily, they should be handled carefully to avoid bruises and cuts. Chilling injures their keeping qualities.

Spinach and kale.—Spinach and kale should be free from sand, dirt, and insects. They should be of good green color, without yellow, decayed leaves, or seed stalks, and of proper size according to the season and the market supplied.

Tomatoes.—Great care should be taken in picking, handling, and packing tomatoes, so that they do not get bruised, cracked, or mashed. They should be picked without stems to avoid the bruising of other fruit by the stems when packed. If they are for immediate use, they should be ripe, but very firm; if they are to last the consumer several days, some should be picked “hard ripe” and others beginning to

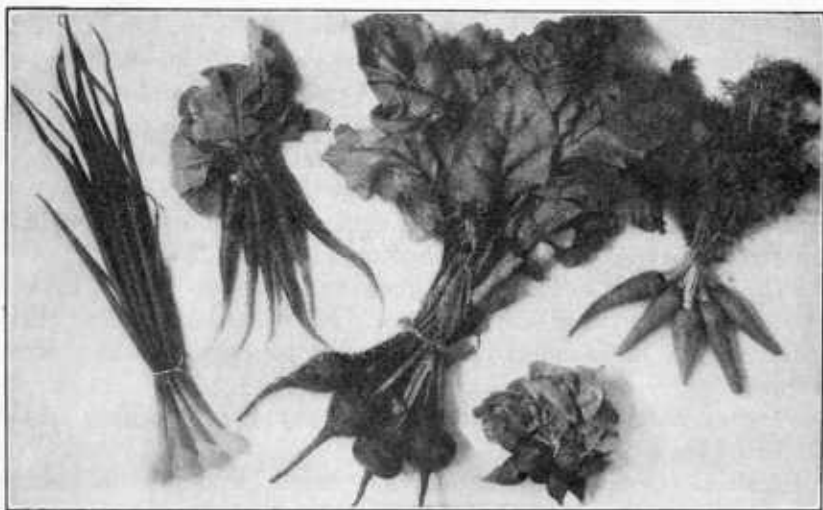


FIG. 8.—“Bunched” vegetables. From left to right: Onions, long radishes, beets, round radishes, and carrots.

ripen. No ill-shaped, split, early, wormy, or otherwise defective tomatoes should be shipped for eating purposes.

It is desirable that fruit shipped should be fairly uniform in size unless it is to meet special requirements of the customer. If shipped with other fruits or vegetables, tomatoes should be so packed that nothing else can mash them.

“BUNCHED” VEGETABLES.

Some vegetables, such as radishes, onions, new beets, carrots, turnips, salsify, watercress, and parsley, are tied in bunches for marketing. Occasionally it may be desirable to bunch them for parcel-post marketing, as shown in figure 8.

“Bunched” vegetables should be of proper size, according to the season and the market custom, and should be neatly and carefully bunched. The number in each bunch varies on the different markets and according to the kind of vegetables. The first five named are usually shipped with the tops on. If the bunches are broken or if they are not bunched in order to facilitate packing, the count and grade should be the same as if they were shipped in bunches.

FARMERS' BULLETINS OF INTEREST TO VEGETABLE AND BERRY GROWERS.

- Farmers' Bulletin 255. The Home Vegetable Garden.
- Farmers' Bulletin 647. The Home Garden in the South.
- Farmers' Bulletin 289. Beans.
- Farmers' Bulletin 433. Cabbage.
- Farmers' Bulletin 282. Celery.
- Farmers' Bulletin 254. Cucumbers.
- Farmers' Bulletin 232. Okra.
- Farmers' Bulletin 354. Onion Culture.
- Farmers' Bulletin 407. The Potato as a Truck Crop.
- Farmers' Bulletin 324. Sweet Potatoes.
- Farmers' Bulletin 220. Tomatoes.
- Farmers' Bulletin 642. Tomato Growing in the South.
- Farmers' Bulletin 460. Frames as a Factor in Truck Growing.
- Farmers' Bulletin 643. Blackberry Culture.
- Farmers' Bulletin 213. Raspberries.
- Farmers' Bulletin 198. Strawberries.
- Farmers' Bulletin 664. Strawberry Growing in the South.

